

# Home Opinion

## HOME FRONT

HELEN DAVIES

@TheSTHome



**A**re you taking stock? Not stockpiling – we're over that now – but a domestic audit, sifting through the leftovers of any resolutions that have limped on into February, or new ones that came with the giddy tingle of breaking dry January.

The English Housing Survey (EHS) is the government's annual assessment of the state of our bricks-and-mortar union. The bleak headline news? The number of young

adults owning a home has plummeted by a third in a decade. Owner occupation rates remain unchanged for the fifth year in a row, but the proportion of 35- to 44-year-olds renting privately more than doubled between 2007-08 and 2017-18, rising from 13% to 28%.

The number of those living in the private rented sector in the capital jumped from 19% to 29% in the decade to 2017-18. For many, the next leave/remain debate will be whether to go it alone, either renting or buying, or stay at home with their parents. It may well be just as decisive, and divisive.

Curiously, amid the blizzard of statistics the EHS tracks, one consequence of the housing crisis is missing. The survey counts "dependent children" as those aged 0-15, as well as 16- to 18-year-olds in full-time education. This means we are woefully behind on assessing the numbers of boomerang

children – these days often accompanied by a spouse and/or children – and multigenerational households, especially those formed to cover care in old age.

The census touches on this, but is taken only once every 10 years. So, should you live in Carlisle, Ceredigion, Hackney or Tower Hamlets, get ready for your close-up. You have just been chosen to rehearse the systems and processes ahead of the digital-first 2021 census, which will be the first to take stock of post-Brexit Britain.

**I'm loving...** Sleep. The current climate – political, environmental, personal and any other you care to mention – has made some sort of hibernation the only way to get through. Now we have woken up to how important sleep is, it is becoming a national obsession. It is also a retail opportunity. Make it that bit more pleasant with a spritz of organic, vegan-friendly (!) Made by Coopers Apothecary Sleepy Head Room & Pillow Mist (£15; madebycoopers.com) and, my latest favourite gadget, the Glow lamp. Launched last week by Casper, the bed-in-a-box people, the smartphone-enabled bedtime light gives you a diminishing



**The next leave/remain debate may be whether to go it alone or stay at the parental home**

45 minutes to read, relax and doze off into darkness (£89, or £169 for a pair; casper.com). Turn it over and it comes back on; wiggle it and the LED dims. I confess I have yet to get to grips with the app, but I can recommend it as the perfect smoke- and toxin-free alternative to candlelight for a bath. Sleep well.

**I'm loathing...** Myself. Must remember to be more thankful to have a roof over my head. Last week, the government revealed that rough sleeping has rocketed by 165% since 2010. And the EHS noted that over 9m households have more than two spare bedrooms, a third more than 20 years ago, while more than 300,000 families in social housing are squeezed into too few rooms – the worst overcrowding since records began in 1995-96.

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MOVING ON



A Cotswold haven of honey-coloured stone, chandeliers, antiques and tasteful interiors, the Flower Press looks good enough for royalty, and it is – sort of. **Jenna Coleman**, who plays Queen Victoria in the ITV drama, stayed here for a weekend in December. Up to four commoners can rent the former vicarage in Bibury, hailed by the textile designer William Morris as "the most beautiful village in England", for £1,125 for a short break (01637 881183, uniquehomestays.com). There's no word on whether Coleman, 32, stayed alone or with **Tom Hughes**, who stars as Prince Albert and is her real-life boyfriend. The third series of the show will air soon, with the action resuming in 1848, a "turbulent and uncertain time". Sound familiar?

Alexandra Goss



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